

his attack on the endowments of the Church, in his attack on the privileges of London, in his design on the throne of Spain, in his design on the throne of England, even in his attempt to govern the country through his nephew. His military undertakings had been a series of disasters. Eeviewing the causes of his failure, it must be said that he failed because he was unwise and headstrong. Some of his ends, such as the attempt to conquer Spain and to crush the liberties of London, were impossible from the first, while the means by which he attempted to carry out his more practicable designs were ill chosen. He never learnt the necessity of conciliation nor could he calculate justly the relative value of political forces.

As to principle, no one ever connected the word with John of Gaunt. He was but a type of the ambitious and selfish noble of the period, armed and tempted to wrongdoing by the retainers at his back. That the Commons were driven by Richard's folly to ally themselves with such forces against the Crown, was a great disaster. The members of the Lower House would have done much to avoid such a union, as their action in several parliaments had shown. It is possible that they would even have been ready to sacrifice their constitutional position to the royal claims, if Richard's despotism had been paternal. But, instead of establishing trustworthy officers to restore order, to keep down the retainers, and to enforce justice, he surrounded himself more and more as the years went on with retainers of his own, who trampled on the rights of the citizen and considered themselves above the law because they wore the King's livery. Langland saw nothing to choose between the retainers of the nobles and Richard's own men, who were distinguished by the badge of the white * hart.' The King's servants

swarmed so thick
Throughout his land in length and in breadth,
That who so had walked through woods and
towns,
Or passed the paths where the Prince dwelt,
Of 'harts^f or *hinds* on henchmen's breasts,
Or some lord's livery that was against the law,
He should have met more than enough.
For they cumbered the country and many a curse
earned,